

Iraq's First Saint Barbara Inductees

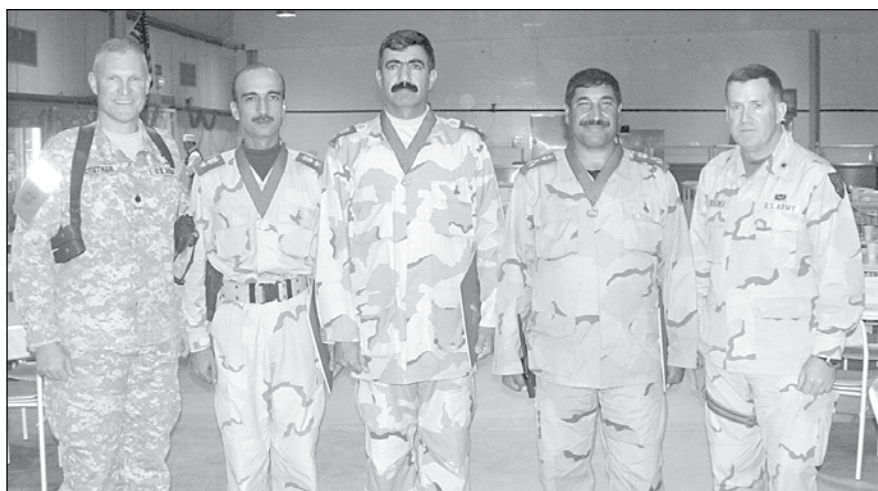
"Are you Infantrymen or Artillerymen?" The question often is asked of members of 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery (4-11 FA), known as Task Force (TF) Thunder. The TF commander Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Scott G. Wuestner answers, "We're both; we're '24 Bravos' [13B plus 11B]." This is the standard reply from members of this diverse Army unit that includes members of the Navy, Air Force and Special Forces.

Four months into their deployment from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, the service members of 4-11 FA, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), perform a mixture of non-standard missions. They provide fire support in Mosul, base defense to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Courage and personal security details to the Provincial Reconstruction Team. Organized as an infantry TF, 4-11 FA's mission is counterinsurgency operations in the Tigris River Valley. The valley includes roughly 11,000 square kilometers in north central Iraq between Baghdad and Mosul.

On 19 December 2005, members of the battalion and 172nd SBCT (TF Freedom) attended the Saint Barbara's Day Ball. The Deputy Commanding General of TF Freedom Brigadier General (BG) Kevin J. Bergner was the guest speaker. Other guests included members of Headquarters, 153rd FA Brigade, serving as the FOB Q-West Garrison Command; 3-13 FA and members of 2-20 FA, who provide convoy security, force protection and multiple launch-rocket system (MLRS) fires in support of the Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I); and members of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, Iraqi Army.

This year's ceremony honored 13 Saint Barbara inductees. Among the honorees were three Iraqi Army battalion commanders who were inducted into the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. They were honored for their work with three US artillery battalions during the last two and a half years. The inductees worked side-by-side with 1-37 FA, 2-8 FA and 4-11 FA. They were instrumental in killing or capturing anti-Iraqi forces (AIF) while working to ensure a free and stable Iraq, specifically in the Tigris River Valley. All three have endured attacks on themselves and their families.

BG Ali Atullah Mullah Al Jaboori is from the Al Qayarah area. He graduated from the Iraqi Military College in 1979 and



The first Iraqi Army inductees into the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. From Left, LTC Scott G. Wuestner, LTC Hoggar Salahaddin Abdul, LTC Ra'ad Naif Haroosh, BG Ali Atullah Mullah and BG Kevin J. Bergner.

was commissioned as an Infantry Lieutenant and assigned to the 3rd Artillery Division. He served in the Iran-Iraq War and was promoted to Captain for bravery. He attended the Iraqi Army Staff College and was promoted to Major in 1987. As the commander of a battalion in the 3rd Artillery Division, he again distinguished himself in the Iran-Iraq War. From 1991 to 1996, BG Ali was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division. In 1997, he was promoted to his present rank and served as Commandant of the Iraqi Military College in Baghdad.

In 1998, BG Ali was jailed by Saddam Hussein for 10 months for failing to attack Kuwait and was forcibly retired in 2001. From 2001 to 2003, he was an adviser to Kurdish resistance forces. In 2003, he organized local Iraqi Army and civilian leaders to welcome the Coalition Forces.

BG Ali commands 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division. He has been awarded 16 medals for bravery and one Purple Heart.

LTC Ra'ad Naif Haroosh hails from the Al Hadr area. He has served in the Iraqi Special Forces for 14 years, 10 of which were during the Iran-Iraq War. After leaving the Iraqi Army, LTC Ra'ad assumed command of the local Oil Protection Battalion.

During the chaos that followed the 2004 elections, he led his soldiers against the AIF. His courage and dedication earned the respect of both the Coalition Forces and Iraqi people.

He assumed command of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division,

in November 2004. He has survived a sniper attack and a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attack on his vehicle.

LTC Hoggar Salahaddin Abdul comes from the Dahouk area. He graduated from the Iraqi Military College in 1980 and was commissioned as an Infantry Lieutenant and assigned to the 4th Division in Zakho.

LTC Hoggar left active duty in 1993 when he joined the Peshmerga. He was an Instructor at the Peshmerga Training Center from 1993 to 2000. In 2000, he joined the Peshmerga Special Forces, and in 2003, he fought beside the US 10th Special Forces Group (SFG) during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

He became Commander of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, in January 2005. His battalion will be the first in the Iraqi Army to transition with US forces to control its own battlespace in Northern Iraq.

When asked about the experience of being inducted into the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara, the three Iraqi artillery commanders said they were honored to be included in this unique Field Artillery tradition. But the honor actually was the other way around—the American Artillerymen were honored to present these distinguished Iraqi freedom fighters with a medal named after their patron saint, Saint Barbara.

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